

Vaccines: Hippocrates, Idiots, and finally some common sense out of California

By ACSH Staff — February 5, 2015



We've been talking about vaccines almost non-stop recently. We

would rather not have to, but it seems as if the tide is now turning in the right direction.

Yesterday, two California state senators, Dr. Richard Pan, a pediatrician, and Ben Allen announced that they were proposing (long overdue) legislation that would eliminate the personal beliefs exemption that now allows parents to bypass immunization of their kids because they feel like it.

A special shoutout goes to Dennis Romero, who [wrote](#) ^[1] in LA Weekly that health officials are putting much of the blame for the measles outbreak on parents who have not immunized their children as a result of beliefs in debunked research, touted by actress *McCarthy and other Hollywood idiots*, that tied vaccinations to autism.

Amen, says ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom. It is way past time that we stopped dancing around this issue. I'm sure that the anti-vaxxers and conspiracy nut jobs will be screaming their granola heads off, so I offer them some words of comfort too damn bad.

But it becomes interesting to examine why these beliefs have become so intransigent. And it is not simply the parents who are to blame. Our leaders are doing a splendid job of pandering, and a particularly awful job of taking a stand and sending a consistent message.

Here are a few particularly galling examples.

California Governor Jerry Brown is apparently [now](#) ^[2] open to restricting vaccine waivers. Lovely. Yet, in 2012 he was [singing a different tune](#) ^[3]: I am signing [the new law] and am directing the Department of Public Health to oversee this policy so parents are not overly burdened by its implementation. Additionally, I will direct the department to allow for a separate religious exemption on the form. In this way, people whose religious beliefs preclude vaccinations will not be required to seek a health care practitioner's signature.

ACSH trustee and vaccine expert Paul Offit has a simple answer for this: I'll allow a religious

exemption to anyone who can show me a sacred text that requires a believer to avoid being vaccinated against contagious disease.

Brown is not alone in the equivocation department. Here are some others. Hope you have a strong stomach:

Hillary Clinton (2008 [4]): I am committed to make investments to find the causes of autism, including possible environmental causes like vaccines.

Hillary Clinton 2015 [5]: The science is clear: The earth is round, the sky is blue, and #vaccineswork [6]. Let s protect all our kids.#GrandmothersKnowBest [7]

Chris Christie (2015 [8]) "All I can say is we vaccinated [our kids].

Chris Christie (2015 [8]) {P}arents need to have some measure of choice in things as well ;

Rand Paul (2015 [9]) "I have heard of many tragic cases of walking, talking normal children who wound up with profound mental disorders after vaccines.

Rand Paul (2015 [10]) Paul says he noted that they were "temporally related," or connected by time. The senator says he "did not allege causation." (Nice backtrack, Rand)

Dr. Bloom says, As if it weren t bad bad enough that Americans take advice from know-nothing celebrities, and TV and internet slimebags, but when our so called leaders are talking out of both sides of their mouths, depending on their audience, on a crucial issue such as this, it s hard for me to put all the blame on the parents. Hey guys! Make up your minds already and have enough integrity to forgo your usual MO lying and pandering. People are paying attention.

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Links

[1] <http://www.laweekly.com/news/law-would-force-measles-shots-on-children-of-personal-belief-anti-vaxxers-5373968>

[2] <http://www.latimes.com/local/politics/la-me-pol-measles-vaccination-20150205-story.html>

[3] <http://scienceblogs.com/insolence/2012/10/01/governor-jerry-brown-signs-california-bill-ab-2109-but-tries-to-water-it-down-in-a-sop-to-religion/>

[4] <http://prospect.org/article/all-three-candidates-have-spoken-about-link-between-vaccines-and-autism>

[5] <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/02/04/anti-vaxxers-funding-ready-for-hillary.html>

[6] <http://twitter.com/hashtag/vaccineswork?src=hash>

[7] <http://twitter.com/hashtag/GrandmothersKnowBest?src=hash>

[8] <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/02/politics/chris-christie-vaccines/>

[9] <http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/rand-paul-vaccines-can-lead-mental-disorders-n298821>

[10] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/03/rand-paul-vaccinations_n_6609854.html